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**The Iowa Blind History Archive
History of Blindness in Iowa - Oral History Project
Interview with [Name]
Conducted by [Name]
[Date]
Transcribed by [Name]**

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

**Dave Hauge, Age 58, Des Moines, Iowa
Meredith Ferguson
Iowa Department for the Blind
4/15/11**

Meredith Ferguson: This is Meredith Ferguson, and I'm interviewing Dave Hauge. The date is April 15, 2011, and the interview is taking place at the Iowa Department for the Blind in Des Moines, Iowa. The time is approximately 11:00

a.m. And, would you please state your full name, and the city and state where you currently live, and your age.

Dave Hauge: David Hauge, and I currently live in Grimes, Iowa, and I'm 58 years old.

Ferguson: Okay. The purpose of this interview is it will become part of the Iowa Department for the Blind's History of Blindness in Iowa Oral History Project. Dave, do I have your consent to record this interview?

Hauge: Yes.

Ferguson: Okay. I just have a few general questions, but the interview is not limited in any way. So, if there's anything you want to talk about, you can talk about. Let's begin by getting your educational background, and then we can lead into how you became involved with the Department.

Hauge: I have my BA degree from The University of Northern Iowa, and my major was Industrial Arts, Education and Safety Education.

Ferguson: Okay. What year did you graduate?

Hauge: I graduated in 1975, well 1974.

Ferguson: Okay. And, how did you get involved with the Department? How did you, were you referred here or some kind of connection?

Hauge: Yes. I received a letter from Florence Grannis, who was the Director of the Library at the time asking me if I would be interested in applying for a teaching position in the Orientation Center.

Ferguson: Okay.

Hauge: And so, I responded to that letter.

Ferguson: How did she hear about you, do you know?

Hauge: I don't know.

Ferguson: You just got a letter from her?

Hauge: I just got a letter, and I believe it was through one of my instructors in the Safety Education Department, but nobody officially ever told me that.

Ferguson: Okay. Did you know about the Department before that?

Hauge: No. I'd never heard of it.

Ferguson: No. So, you had no idea?

Hauge: No.

Ferguson: Okay. So, Kenneth Jernigan hired you, correct?

Hauge: Yes.

Ferguson: Okay. And, that was in 1975?

Hauge: Yes.

Ferguson: So, how...I guess, in previous times that we've talked you told me a little about your first day, walking around. So, I guess maybe if you could go through that again? I just found it really interesting.

Hauge: The first day that I was working here?

Ferguson: Yep, the first day you were working here.

Hauge: I was asked to be here about 10 minutes to 8:00, so I was. And, I was asked to go in and sit in the Director's Conference Room. And, Dr. Jernigan said he'd tell me later what was going on. He said he really didn't have time to explain it to me at that point. So, I go in, and people started coming in the room, and they all seemed to know each other, and it turned out that that it was a leadership seminar for the National Federation of the Blind that was being held here in Des Moines. And so, the first morning we had John Taylor, who was the head of Field Operations; Jim Omvig, who was the head of the Orientation Center; Florence Grannis, who was the head of the Library; all of those folks came and spoke to this group about the Department and what each one of their divisions did and how they operated. That afternoon we went on a four hour tour of the agency, and then went up to Mr. Jernigan's apartment, had supper, and then came back down to the Director's Conference Room where we continued on with the seminar then; as far as discussing issues of blindness. And, that went Friday,

Saturday and Sunday. So, it was a four-day...this was on a Thursday morning, so it was a four-day seminar. And, at the end of that time, on Sunday afternoon, I got a...there was a knock at the door, and a gentleman came in, Paul Hahle. And, Paul was the person I was replacing as the Industrial Arts teacher, and Mr. Jernigan said I was to come with Paul back here to the Department and start my training. So, I started in the shop under sleep shades at 2:00 Sunday afternoon until about 6:00 that night.

Ferguson: How long did your training last?

Hauge: I was in the Orientation Center through the end of June of that year. I started January 2, 1975, and June 30...So, I started teaching, when we started after the week of the Fourth of July.

Ferguson: How did you...since you didn't have any, exposure might not be the right word, but to blindness or the Department. How did you feel going through the Orientation Center?

Hauge: When I was hired, I had spoken quite extensively with Mr. Jernigan about that. And, you know, we were talking and I said I got this letter, but I said I really know nothing about the Department. And he said, "We prefer it that way." And so, he proceeded to explain why the agency prefers to train its own staff as opposed to hiring people who have degrees in work with the blind. And so, he said that anything I needed to learn they would teach me during the training, and that's why the training was going to be six months long. And, I was very happy to hear that, because I

thought, certainly, I can't do this job without the training, and that I really had no business being here if I didn't have some understanding about blindness. So, it made a lot of sense to me.

Ferguson: You said he explained why they preferred to hire their own people and train them. Why was that?

Hauge: There are a lot of schools who have training programs for teachers of the visually impaired and travel training programs that don't do extensive sleep shade training with their teachers. And so, people come out of those programs with maybe a lot of classroom knowledge, but they don't have much first-hand knowledge of what blindness really is, and how you can deal with some of the problems that arise. The sleep shade training that our staff undergo here gives you firsthand experience with, you know, the same frustrations and the same successes that our students are experiencing; which sleep shade training leads to a lot of confidence in the skills that we are teaching.

Ferguson: Yes.

Hauge: So, that's the biggest benefit.

Ferguson: Okay. So, how did you get into the position that you are now. Or, what's your title now, I guess?

Hauge: My official title right now is that I am the Rehabilitation Referral Specialist for the agency.

Ferguson: Okay.

Hauge: What that means is that I am unofficially the Supervisor of the Orientation Center. Sandy Tigges is the Program Administrator. I deal with the day-to-day problems with the students, scheduling, insurance problems, Social Security problems, staffing; just kind of making sure that things get done when they're suppose to. And, I've been in this position for about 11 years now.

Ferguson: Okay. What, did you hold any other positions before?

Hauge: No, I taught Industrial Arts for 25 years, and I switched to this position about 11 years ago.

Ferguson: Okay. And, do you like what you're doing now?

Hauge: Oh yeah.

Ferguson: As opposed to...

Hauge: I'm still involved day-to-day with the students, and it's still, you know, you're still working with people that want to be here. Yeah, so it's a little different than downstairs, but it's still fine.

Ferguson: Okay. So, I guess one of the big questions I have is about the model for the Orientation Center, and then compared to other Orientation Centers. Because in another meeting with you, you gave me kind of like a really long list. And, I guess, I wanted to go over some of those again, or just kind of like the comparisons?

Hauge: Sure. The Department for the Blind was one of the first agencies that started using sleep shades. And, it was and still is fairly controversial in work with the blind. There are a lot of centers that don't have students wear sleep shades. And, that and the length of this program are probably the two things that make it the most unique. If you go to most Orientation Centers, they are teaching the same classes. So, they have, you know, speech with computer, they have some sort of a travel program; teaching people how to use the cane and mobility. There's a Home Ec. class and some have an Industrial Arts class. But, the biggest difference is that a lot of those centers let students decide to use sleep shades or not use sleep shades. And, of course, here we require our students to use sleep shades.

The other thing is there are some of those other programs out there, where the length of time is three and four months. And, here we talk about an average stay of six to nine months, which is self-directed. So, it can be extended if somebody needs to stay longer; or less time if somebody finishes early. That certainly is an advantage for people, because it lets them not just learn the skills on an, okay, I've finished the Braille alphabet now. They use Braille to the point where they finish a novel, or they get into their novel and they really develop some speed with Braille; or they do travel, where they're not just knowing the basics, but that they're really competent in their skills of travel. And so, it gives time to develop not just the skill, but also a very positive attitude about blindness. And, again, that's the biggest thrust of the Orientation Center is helping people develop that sense of confidence, and a positive attitude about blindness.

When you talk about other centers, there are certainly a lot of other centers that have been modeled on this. We have had former students who have gone to Idaho and become Director of the state agency out there. There was a state agency Director in Florida. There have been, the Nebraska Orientation Center was patterned after this one. The Blind Inc. in Minneapolis is patterned after us; the one in Ruston, Louisiana. New Mexico is patterned after Nebraska, so they're patterned after us. The Orientation Center in Colorado is run by the NFB, which is based on this one. The New Visions Program out in Hawaii is modeled after us. You know, a couple of years ago we trained all their staff. So, the program in Idaho, they've sent their staff here for training. They've hired some of our former students. So, there are several programs that are similar to Iowa now nationally. Blind...BISM, Blind Industries something or other, in Baltimore.

Ferguson: Yeah, I've heard of it.

Hauge: They're starting to do things the way this Orientation Center does. Those are the ones I can think of off the top of my head.

Ferguson: Hawaii. Can you talk a little bit about the Hawaii program?

Hauge: Sure. We had a former student who lived in Hawaii, and was a member of one of the organizations. And, he had, for a long time, been trying to get the Hawaii Agency to make some changes in their program. He called and asked Sandy Tigges if it would be okay if we had two or three folks

from their organization come and just stay for a few weeks here, and sort of see what the program was all about. So, we did that. And then, they invited Sandy to come and speak at their State Convention in Hawaii. Then in the year 2000, we sponsored, the Orientation Center, sponsored a national workshop for all Orientation Centers. We invited 70 some centers, and among the people who came to that was the Director of the Hawaii Agency, Dave Eveland. Dave had met Sandy, when she was in Hawaii. And, after attending this seminar, went back to Hawaii and spoke to some more folks from the organization, and they decided to make some changes in their agency, and in their Orientation Center. They had a program in Hawaii, prior to their change, where people could pick and choose what classes they were going to go to. So, you didn't have to take Braille if you didn't want to; you didn't have to take Computer; you didn't have to take Home Ec. You could come a couple of hours a week and just, you know, if you wanted to learn just Braille, you could do that. No sleep shades. And, in the basement of the building, they had a sheltered workshop where they made mops for state government.

15:00

Hauge: So, when Dave Eveland decided to make the change, he asked and we agreed that we would have all their teachers, both Rehab. Teachers and Orientation Center teachers come and spend three weeks at a time here in our Orientation Center, going through it as a student. And, that started with Lea Grupen, who is the Program Administrator for the Orientation Center, and then we went through their

entire Orientation Center staff and Rehab. Teachers; and they all came for three weeks at a time.

When that leg was finished, Hawaii got a grant, and they asked us to then send our teachers out there with the teachers from the Louisiana Center for the Blind. And, there were some teachers from Blind Inc. that went out, but primarily it was Louisiana and Iowa that sent teachers to work with their teachers in the Orientation Center in Hawaii. So, for instance, I went out six different times in a year's time, for a week at a time, and worked with Gordon Takasono, who is their Industrial Arts Teacher in his classroom. Ric went out...Ric Frambach, who is the current shop teacher, went out three times. And, I think the guy from Louisiana went out four times and worked with Gordon there. And, they have pretty much switched their entire program; they are now a sleep shade-using center. They're open-ended like we are, in terms of the length of their students. The sheltered shop is gone, mandatory classes, no more picking and choosing. But, their graduates are starting to get much better jobs than they were previously; people are starting to attend college. Blind people are just generally happier with the program in Hawaii, than they were five years ago, say. So, that's kind of Hawaii.

Ferguson: Okay. And, then Kansas was another one I remember you talking a little about.

Hauge: About five years ago, the Director of the Kansas Orientation Center wanted to make some changes, and so she had asked if they could send staff up here. Well, Sandy and I talked it over, and really thought that probably the best way to show them what our program was about, was to take

our students and some of our staff and go to the Kansas Orientation Center and run our Center for a week in their Orientation Center. And so, Sandy and I, and Mary Clarke, and Cynthia Qloud took 10 of our students and went to Kansas and operated the Orientation Center for a week. As a result of that, we had two of our students, who had been with us that week; they were hired to work with the Kansas staff for the summer. And so, they spent the entire summer down there training the Kansas Orientation Center staff. And, so, Diane Hemline, who is the Director of the Orientation Center, was very pleased with the outcome. You know, with what they were able to do with their staff, in terms of changing attitudes and stuff.

Ferguson: Okay. You mentioned the sheltered workshop. I'm just curious what your experience has been with sheltered workshops, because I only know...I know a bare minimum about them, I guess. And, I don't think people realize how long they stayed around. I mean, that was in the 1970's?

Hauge: '75 was my first experience with a sheltered workshop. We were at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind. And, at that time I believe they employed close to 600 people. And, at that time they could also pay one half of minimum wage. So, the people who were working there were making \$1.25 an hour. And, the law has since been changed to where they can pay full minimum wage. But, that model of having a sheltered workshop just for the blind has never been implemented in Iowa, and hopefully never will be. Simply because, you know, blind people are capable

of doing much more than just working in sheltered employment.

Ferguson: I guess, maybe we should, could you explain what a sheltered workshop is?

Hauge: It's a place where, usually a factory type of setting, and there's what they call the National Industries for the Blind, which is a quasi-governmental board, who comes up with products. So, a lot of them around the country make products for the government. So, if the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind...The folks who are still in the factory part of that are working with, they make clocks for the federal government. The Alpha Point, which is in Kansas City, makes pens that are sold or used in government installations. So, each one has one or two or three contracts. There's one in Minneapolis, the last time I was up there, they were making helmet liners.

Ferguson: What year was that?

Hauge: Oh, that was in 1995, or so, we were up there. They may have switched contracts now, but they were...You know, that was for helmet covers for the military. Typically, the sheltered workshops are places where they hire exclusively blind people, and most of the management positions are run by sighted people. The goal is not to get you off SSI or SSDI. Most of them will work with you to keep you under the SGA for blind. And so, when you're starting to get your SGA, they will conveniently arrange to lay you off for a week or two or, you know, a few months until, so that you don't go over that maximum, so that you don't lose your

benefits, as far as Social Security. And, really, there's no chance of advancement. If you're making pens in Kansas City at the beginning of your career, that's what you're going to be doing at the end of your career. There's no, there is no chance for advancement. The same way with the ones in, well, there are two of them in Milwaukee that are...Wiscraft is one where they make pencils and the other one, and they make some brooms there, I believe. I can't remember the second one's name right now, but they make parts for Briggs & Stratton Engines and they also make parts for Harley Davidson. But, typically, when you go in, again you don't see sighted people working there. I mean, it's all blind guys, but the management typically are sighted, and the prevailing wage of those shops is not the same as the prevailing wage in other factories. So, the factory in Milwaukee where somebody is making parts for Harley Davidson Motorcycles, you know, they're making minimum wage at the sheltered workshop. Whereas, if you go, you know, 20 blocks down the street to the Harley factory they're making \$20 an hour for making similar parts, which is not really fair. So, that's kind of what sheltered workshops are.

Ferguson: Alright. Were you, have you been involved with any advocacy or with the NFB over the years? I think that's a yes?

Hauge: Yes. I was a member of the NFB for a number of years.

Ferguson: You're no longer a member?

Hauge: I'm not a member of either organization now.

Ferguson: Could you maybe talk a little bit about your involvement...your earlier or later?

Hauge: Sure.

(End of Recording 1)

24:19

(Beginning of Recording 2)

Ferguson: Okay, this is Meredith Ferguson and we're back with Dave Hauge. And, my last question is, basically, how do you think the outlook toward blindness has changed in Iowa over the years?

Hauge: It's getting better. It's always been a slow process, and it'll continue to be a slow process. In the early '60s, we had the first blind electrical engineer, who graduated from Iowa State University. And, Curt did a great job in his career. I think he has since retired, but so have his teachers at Iowa State and all the folks that he worked with. So, people know that there was an electrical engineer out there who was blind, but all the people he worked with are also gone. So, it's a re-education of the next generation; not only of the next generation of blind people, but the next generation of educators and employers.

So, it's a continuous process, but every time a blind person is successful in a career, it encourages the next blind person that he can also do the same thing. So, that there have been many firsts. You know, the first blind teacher in Iowa, the first doctor to go through medical

school as a blind person, the first electrical engineer. Every time one of those people succeeds, it makes it easier for the next person; but it's not a perfect world yet. And, blind people still do not have the same opportunity when they walk into an employer. People still see the cane, and they still have questions about blindness, but it's easier and easier to answer those questions to the employer every time another blind person succeeds. And so, I think it's good. I think that things have gotten better overall.

Ferguson: Do you have any, I guess, examples of, like, have you gone to any interviews with anybody, or heard about them, you know, not any names, just...I guess, just general examples of what would, how some things have changed versus like in the '70's when you first started?

Hauge: We had a student Monday who interviewed for a job in a manufacturing company. We haven't heard officially yet, but I believe he's got the job. The interview took about 45 minutes, and because of the employer's past involvement with the Department for the Blind and other disabled people, the questions about whether this individual was going to be able to do the job or not really weren't asked on the basis of blindness. You know, "What is your past mechanical abilities?" Or, and it was based on those qualifications that he's going to get the job. And, I think 30 years ago, blindness would have entered in. So, that's the most recent example that I can think of.

Ferguson: That's a good example. What are some of the stereotypes that you still run into a lot? I guess, like maybe the biggest one; two or three that seem to keep recurring?

Hauge: The Director of the Orientation Center, Sandy Tigges, and Sandy's blind. If she and I walk into any organization, any meeting, whatever where people don't know us and know what our jobs are; people automatically assume that I'm the boss, and that Sandy is one of the teachers. It's still one of the stereotypes out there is that a blind person won't be in charge. If we walk into a restaurant, they will come to me and say, "Where you all from?" They won't address one of the blind staff. So, there are still stereotypes out there that blind people shouldn't be, or aren't going to be the ones in charge; that somehow because I'm sighted that therefore, I'm the one that's directing things. Even though they haven't seen anything that's happened; they just automatically assume the person with vision is the management. And, that's a big stereotype that's still out there.

Ferguson: Can you think of anything that's gotten worse over the years, or do you feel like it's, you know...

Hauge: Technology has changed things in that in the Orientation Center people sometimes look at technology as being the Savior to their problems, instead of just being a tool the same as Braille or using the cane for travel. People sometimes view computer class as something that's different than the other classes in the Orientation Center. And, it really isn't because blind people, you know, any of the other classes are there to help build confidence and skills, the same as computer class. But, somehow, people have gotten this notion that the computer skills are more important than any of the other skills that they're going to

learn; and really they're not, you know. People succeed without being the perfect computer user. You know, you can pick those skills up after you leave the Orientation Center, if you have the right attitude about blindness. So, that's been one of the things that technology has changed.

People sometimes think that, gee, if I had a GPS unit on my cell phone I'm not going to have to learn travel. They still need to learn travel. The GPS is not perfect. You can lose the signal. It can be a tool, and it can be effective if you use it correctly, but it's not going to solve every situation. It's not going to work inside buildings; it's not going to work in multiple story buildings; it's not going to work if you're hiking in Yellow Stone National Park. So, it has its limitations. Once people learn that it does have limitations, then they can move on and put technology in its proper place in their lives. But, I think it's very easy for people to think that technology is going to be the answer. That's been a change.

Ferguson: Okay. If you don't have anything else to add, I've gone through my list of questions.

Hauge: I can't think of anything right now.

Ferguson: Okay. Well, thank you very much, again.

(End of Recording 2)

7:37

Jo Ann Slayton

6/6/11